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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001332

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: CHARGE DISCUSSES BILATERAL RELATIONS, EXPULSION
WITH MFA OFFICIALS

REF: CARACAS 01324

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The Charge met September 19 with MFA Director for Multilateral and North American Affairs Yaneth Arocha to discuss bilateral relations. This was the Charge's first meeting with MFA officials, and it followed President Chavez's expulsion of the Ambassador on September 11. Arocha said that despite the expulsion, Emboffs and MFA officials should continue to cooperate on technical issues. The Charge urged the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) to be responsive on reciprocity issues, and suggested the MFA designate a point of contact at the Ministry to assist with visa matters. Regarding security concerns, Arocha stated that the Charge should contact the MFA or local authorities if he believed there were credible threats against the Embassy or its personnel. The Charge also requested permission for the Ambassador's spouse to return to Caracas to pack family effects which Arocha immediately agreed to. He added that the USG is currently reviewing the diplomatic relationship. END SUMMARY.

Securing Visas

12. (C) After his morning meeting with Rene Arreaza (Reftel), the Charge, accompanied by A/DCM and Poloff, met with Arocha at the MFA and expressed similar talking points regarding the Ambassador's expulsion and bilateral relations. Arocha cordially welcomed the Charge to Venezuela, and said that Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro had ordered the Protocol Office to issue the Charge his diplomatic carnet and grant him all rights and immunities soonest.

13. (C) The Charge raised Emboff's difficulties in securing visas and requested the MFA's assistance in this matter. He suggested the MFA appoint a liaison to help reduce delays in visa issuance, and said A/DCM would assist the MFA with similar issues. Arocha said, as she has on other occasions, that the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington is largely responsible for visa delays. She added that her office wants to work with Emboffs on technical issues and does not seek to complicate bilateral relations any further. The Charge added

that he was concerned that the BRV might be restricting visas for diplomatic security personnel, specifically security technicians. He noted that continued restriction of those visas could put the Embassy and USG personnel at risk.

Anti-American Rhetoric

¶4. (C) The Charge categorically dismissed President Chavez's unfounded claims that the USG is attempting to stage a coup against the Venezuelan president, bomb the Miraflores presidential palace, or assassinate Chavez. Arocha said it was not the government's intention to create an atmosphere of xenophobia. She said, instead, that Chavez, in his public statements, sought to distinguish between USG policies and the general American public. She added that if ever the Charge felt that the Embassy or its personnel were at risk, he should contact the MFA or law enforcement agencies to provide extra police protection.

Importing Security Vehicles

¶5. (C) The Charge stated that the BRV's newly-implemented restrictions on the importation of eight-cylinder vehicles has caused hardships for some Emboffs. He requested the BRV waive restrictions on privately-owned, eight-cylinder vehicles already at port and those in route to Venezuela. Charge also informed Arocha of the Embassy's plans to import five armored vehicles for security reasons and requested importation of those without incident. Arocha said she would contact Seniat, the tax collection agency, to request an

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update on the regulations involving said vehicles and would issue a response at a later date.

Mutual Expulsions

¶6. (C) Arocha appeared to have already been briefed on the request of the Ambassador's spouse to return to Venezuela to pack-out, and offered to coordinate with the MFA's Protocol Office to facilitate it. Like Arreaza, Arocha noted that Mrs. Alvarez would seek similar assurances in the coming days. Arocha told the Charge that the BRV was interested in keeping the Ambassador's spouse's return as low-profile as possible. Charge responded that was our intention and expected the same if Mrs. Alvarez returned.

¶7. (C) Arocha and her staff stressed the BRV's interest in restoring "normalcy" to bilateral relations. Charge replied that while the USG intends to maintain relations at a lower level it would require the cooperation of the BRV on routine matters, cooperation that was lacking now. He added that the BRV should not underestimate the damage done to the relationship by the expulsion of the Ambassador or the speed at which this damage could be repaired. MFA officials appear intent on continuing to serve as liaisons between Emboffs and the BRV on technical issues. As was true before the Ambassador's expulsion, it is readily apparent that they are often the last ones to be informed about changes to the bilateral relationship and are often playing catch-up. It remains unclear whether these officials will be willing or able to help resolve long-standing reciprocity issues.

CAULFIELD